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Priestley was equally unenlightened on the opposite side. Such a merely negative criticism as that quoted by Mr. Stout does not suffice to show any positive appreciation of the significance of self-determination.

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A PERSONAL EXPLANATION.

WHEN a book has been long out of print and is not to be reprinted, what is its author to do when parts of it are attacked? What is he to do specially when the attack is aimed at a point on which for many years he has come to think that he was partly mistaken? If he keeps silence, he may seem to shrink from acknowledging an error. But if he thrusts himself forward to admit that seventeen years ago he made a mistake, he may be charged with some degree of indecency.

A portion of the arguments which in my "Ethical Studies" I brought against Hedonism, I find has been attacked by Mr. Hodder in this JOURNAL, Vol. III. pp. 107-8. Mr. Hodder's writing is vigorous, and when I say that the substance of his article strikes me as much what in his day J. S. Mill might have put out, I shall not have strained my conscience and yet may hope to have gratified my critic. But I feel concerned in the matter only so far as it compels me unwillingly to obtrude a kind of personal explanation.

In my "Ethical Studies," 1876, and in a pamphlet which followed in 1877, I urged that the Hedonistic End contradicts itself in a certain way. If you take this End, I argued, as a collection or aggregate, and still further if you take it as an infinite sum, you find yourself landed in inconsistencies. There were other additions and refinements, into which I need hardly now enter. But I used the above argument, and I admit that it was largely mistaken, and I would ask permission to say why and how I think it went wrong.

I first made an assumption. I assumed that with regard to its End Hedonism is bound to have an idea which is logically consistent. As to the truth of this assumption I

will say something presently, but at least the contention I based on it seems certainly wrong. For Hedonism is not forced to place its End in an infinite series or collection, nor is it compelled to define its End, when that is taken in general, as a collection at all. And so far as I asserted this, I was certainly in error. Whether my argument was good or bad if taken as an *argumentum ad hominem* is, of course, another question. It is a question on which, having let the subject drop, I do not now feel qualified to judge. And at this date I cannot be asked to renew the studies which would be required for a decision. As to the main point, the one point which I presume has any interest, I have no doubt. The argument did not hold against Hedonism considered as a principle.

And whether a moral philosopher is bound to formulate his first principle consistently seems doubtful at best. We must in each case perhaps judge by the attitude and pretensions of the writer. If he claims to have some grasp of first principles, we may ask him, I suppose, for logical consistency. I do not mean that the idea of good can fail ultimately to contradict itself. But in my judgment it must contradict itself only in such a way as to pass into something fuller, something in which its elements cease to conflict and its end is realized. It must not be left stranded and stuck in a fixed discrepancy. And so far, I believe, I was right. But to demand clear principles from all who wish to write about ethics was probably mistaken.

But what underlay this misconceived objection was, I think, no mistake, and, in justice to myself, I would ask permission to point it out. I took the view that the good must be a whole and a system, or (if you prefer the phrase) must be a concrete and consistent individual. Hedonism did not and does not seem to me to meet this demand. For the quality of pleasure, taken by itself, is obviously not a system. And if, on the other hand, we try to find our whole in a mere collection of so-called pleasures, we fall at once into difficulties from which there is no exit. I do not, of course, forget that Hedonism demands the systematization of life, but the ob-

jection here is that the system is external to the End. For if it is included, then at once Hedonism is in principle given up. To identify the pleasant and the good is, in my judgment, not Hedonism, nor is it Hedonism to identify the more pleasant and the better. You are not properly a Hedonist until you deny the worth of everything but pleasure. I may add that, though my language was in many respects one-sided and much overstrained, I was explicit on the point that I on my side did not exclude pleasure from the good.

I may be allowed perhaps to say further that it was Individualism, much rather than Hedonism, on which really I was making war. I would not say now that *every* consistent Hedonist *must* identify virtue with self-seeking. But Hedonism, whatever conclusion it may adopt on this point, will on this point, I think, infallibly break down. It will, when pressed, become plainly bankrupt, or end in something inconsistent or arbitrary. A rational way of transcending the abstraction of the private self must (it seems to me) transcend also the abstraction of mere pleasure. But this is matter of controversy on which it is not my object to dwell; and between some later Hedonism and myself there is no great cause for controversy. If I have moved a little, on the other side there has been movement also. Indeed, I sometimes fancy that I might end on terms of friendship with Hedonism. For if I may reject the weak psychology and crude metaphysics of, say, J. S. Mill, if I may turn my back on every shallow attempt to compromise between extremes or to bring together uncriticised discrepancies mechanically and from the outside, and if I may take without prejudice the Hedonist's conclusion to be general pleasure, why should I seek to deny that such a statement may after all convey, erroneously and one-sidedly, the truth?

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